

# Call to the Congress of the People

*Leaflet issued by the National Action Council of the Congress of the People, 1955*

## **WE CALL THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA BLACK AND WHITE— LET US SPEAK TOGETHER OF FREEDOM!**

### **WE CALL THE FARMERS OF THE RESERVES AND TRUST LANDS.**

Let us speak of the wide land, and the narrow strips on which we toil.  
Let us speak of brothers without land, and of children without schooling.  
Let us speak of taxes and of cattle, and of famine.  
*LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM.*

### **WE CALL THE MINERS OF COAL, GOLD AND DIAMONDS.**

Let us speak of the dark shafts, and the cold compounds far from our families.  
Let us speak of heavy labour and long hours, and of men sent home to die.  
Let us speak of rich masters and poor wages.  
*LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM.*

### **WE CALL THE WORKERS OF FARMS AND FORESTS.**

Let us speak of the rich foods we grow, and the laws that keep us poor.  
Let us speak of harsh treatment and of children and women forced to work.  
Let us speak of private prisons, and beatings and of passes.  
*LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM.*

### **WE CALL THE WORKERS OF FACTORIES AND SHOPS.**

Let us speak of the good things we make, and the bad conditions of our work.  
Let us speak of the many passes and the few jobs.  
Let us speak of foremen and of transport and of trade unions; of holidays and of houses.  
*LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM.*

### **WE CALL THE TEACHERS, STUDENTS AND THE PREACHERS.**

Let us speak of the light that comes with learning, and the ways we are kept in darkness.  
Let us speak of great services we can render, and of the narrow ways that are open to us.  
Let us speak of laws, and government, and rights.  
*LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM.*

### **WE CALL THE HOUSEWIVES AND THE MOTHERS.**

Let us speak of the fine children that we bear, and of their stunted lives.  
Let us speak of the many illnesses and deaths, and of the few clinics and schools.  
Let us speak of high prices and of shanty towns.  
*LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM.*

## LET US SPEAK TOGETHER

ALL OF US TOGETHER—African and European, Indian and Coloured.  
Voter and voteless. Privileged and rightless. The happy and the homeless.  
All the people of South Africa; of the towns and of the countryside.

LET US SPEAK TOGETHER OF FREEDOM. And of the  
happiness that can come to men and women if they live in a land that is free.

*LET US SPEAK TOGETHER OF FREEDOM. And of how to get it for ourselves, and for our  
children.*

LET THE VOICE OF ALL THE PEOPLE BE HEARD. AND LET THE DEMANDS OF ALL THE  
PEOPLE FOR THE THINGS THAT WILL MAKE US FREE BE RECORDED. LET THE DEMANDS BE  
GATHERED TOGETHER IN A GREAT **CHARTER OF FREEDOM**.

WE CALL ON ALL GOOD MEN AND TRUE, to speak now of freedom, and to write their  
own demands into the Charter of Freedom.

WE CALL ALL WHO LOVE LIBERTY to pledge their lives from here on to win the Freedoms  
set out in the Charter.

WE CALL ALL THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA TO PREPARE FOR:

**THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE**—Where representatives of the people, everywhere in  
the land, will meet together in a great assembly, to discuss and adopt the Charter of  
Freedom.

*Let us organise together for the Congress of the People.*

*Let us speak together of Freedom.*

*Let us work together for the Freedom Charter.*

**LET US GO FORWARD TOGETHER TO FREEDOM!**

*This Call to the*

## **CONGRESS of the PEOPLE**

*is addressed to all South Africans, European and Non-European.*

It is made by four bodies, speaking for the four sections of the people of South Africa:—by the African National Congress, the South African Indian Congress, the Congress of Democrats, and the South African Coloured People's Organisation.

It calls you all to prepare to send your chosen spokesmen to:

## **THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE,**

a meeting of elected representatives of all races, coming together from every town and village, every farm and factory, every mine and kraal, every street and suburb, in the whole land. Here all will speak together, freely, as equals. They will speak together of the things their people need to make them free. They will speak together of changes that must be made in our lives, our laws, our customs and our outlooks. They will speak together of freedom. And they will write their demands into

# THE FREEDOM CHARTER.

This Charter will express all the demands of all the people for the good life that they seek for themselves and their children. The Freedom Charter will be our guide to those "singing tomorrows" when all South Africans will live and work together, without racial bitterness and fear of misery, in peace and harmony.

THIS IS A CALL for an awakening of all men and women, to campaign together in the greatest movement of all our history.

Our call is to you—the People of South Africa. We invite all Unionwide Organisations to join as sponsors of the CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE, and to take part in its direction. Those who are not afraid to hear the voice of the people will join us. We will welcome them, and work together with them as equals.

We invite all local and provincial societies, clubs, churches, trade unions, sporting bodies and other organisations to join as partners in the CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE Committee, and to share the work. Those who are not afraid to speak of freedom will join us. We will welcome them, and work together with them as equals.

We invite all South African men and women of every race and creed to take part as organisers of the CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE and awaken others to its message. Those who are prepared to work together for freedom and the Freedom Charter will join us. We will welcome them, and go forward together with them to freedom.

# OUR CALL IS TO YOU!

- Give your time to spread the message of the CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE.
- Become a Volunteer to organise for freedom.
- Tell your neighbours and workmates of the nation-wide elections that are coming.
- Rouse the people to discuss what they want of freedom.

## LET US WORK TOGETHER FOR FREEDOM!

### THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE

*will take place*

- when all the people's demands for inclusion in the Freedom Charter have been gathered in;
- when the whole country has been awakened to speak of freedom,
- and the call for elections has been made;
- not later than June, 1955—at a date and place still to be announced.

## **THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE**

*will be organised*

- by 50,000 Volunteers, who will give their time to carrying through the campaign as directed;
- by a network of committees in every village, town and factory, representing and uniting all sections and all races.
- by the National Action Council, composed of all national bodies that agree to act as sponsors.

### ***DO THESE THREE THINGS-NOW!***

**ONE:** SEND IN YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS TO A PROVINCIAL COMMITTEE OF THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE, stating that you are interested and would like to assist.

Transvaal Committee, Box 11045, Johannesburg.

Natal Committee, Box 2299, Durban.

Western Cape Committee, Box 4552, Cape Town.

Eastern Cape Committee, Box 1294, Port Elizabeth.

O.F.S. Committee, 3397 Masito Street, Bloemfontein.

**TWO:** FORM COMMITTEES to campaign for the Congress of the People.

**THREE:** GATHER GROUPS to send in their demands for the Freedom Charter.

\*

DO NOT THROW THIS LEAFLET AWAY! PASS IT ON TO A FRIEND.DISCUSS IT WITH OTHERS.

SEE THAT IT IS READ BY MANY PEOPLE.

**Issued by the National Action Council of the Congress of the People,  
Box 11045,  
Johannesburg.**

# The Freedom Charter

---

*Adopted at the Congress of the People, Kliptown, on 26 June 1955*

---

***We, the People of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know:***

that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people;

that our people have been robbed of their birthright to land, liberty and peace by a form of government founded on injustice and inequality;

that our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities;

that only a democratic state, based on the will of all the people, can secure to all their birthright without distinction of colour, race, sex or belief;

And therefore, we, the people of South Africa, black and white together equals, countrymen and brothers adopt this Freedom Charter;

And we pledge ourselves to strive together, sparing neither strength nor courage, until the democratic changes here set out have been won.

## **The People Shall Govern!**

Every man and woman shall have the right to vote for and to stand as a candidate for all bodies which make laws;

All people shall be entitled to take part in the administration of the country;

The rights of the people shall be the same, regardless of race, colour or sex;

All bodies of minority rule, advisory boards, councils and authorities shall be replaced by democratic organs of self-government .

## **All National Groups Shall have Equal Rights!**

There shall be equal status in the bodies of state, in the courts and in the schools for all national groups and races;

All people shall have equal right to use their own languages, and to develop their own folk culture and customs;

All national groups shall be protected by law against insults to their race and national pride;

The preaching and practice of national, race or colour discrimination and contempt shall be a punishable crime;

All apartheid laws and practices shall be set aside.

## **The People Shall Share in the Country's Wealth!**

The national wealth of our country, the heritage of South Africans, shall be restored to the people;

The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the Banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole;

All other industry and trade shall be controlled to assist the wellbeing of the people;

All people shall have equal rights to trade where they choose, to manufacture and to enter all trades, crafts and professions.

## **The Land Shall be Shared Among Those Who Work It!**

Restrictions of land ownership on a racial basis shall be ended, and all the land re-divided amongst those who work it to banish famine and land hunger;

The state shall help the peasants with implements, seed, tractors and dams to save the soil and assist the tillers;

Freedom of movement shall be guaranteed to all who work on the land;

All shall have the right to occupy land wherever they choose;

People shall not be robbed of their cattle, and forced labour and farm prisons shall be abolished.



## **All Shall be Equal Before the Law!**

No-one shall be imprisoned, deported or restricted without a fair trial; No-one shall be condemned by the order of any Government official;

The courts shall be representative of all the people;

Imprisonment shall be only for serious crimes against the people, and shall aim at re-education, not vengeance;

The police force and army shall be open to all on an equal basis and shall be the helpers and protectors of the people;

All laws which discriminate on grounds of race, colour or belief shall be repealed.

## **All Shall Enjoy Equal Human Rights!**

The law shall guarantee to all their right to speak, to organise, to meet together, to publish, to preach, to worship and to educate their children;

The privacy of the house from police raids shall be protected by law;

All shall be free to travel without restriction from countryside to town, from province to province, and from South Africa abroad;

Pass Laws, permits and all other laws restricting these freedoms shall be abolished.

## **There Shall be Work and Security!**

All who work shall be free to form trade unions, to elect their officers and to make wage agreements with their employers;

The state shall recognise the right and duty of all to work, and to draw full unemployment benefits;

Men and women of all races shall receive equal pay for equal work;

There shall be a forty-hour working week, a national minimum wage, paid annual leave, and sick leave for all workers, and maternity leave on full pay for all working mothers;

Miners, domestic workers, farm workers and civil servants shall have the same rights as all others who work;

Child labour, compound labour, the tot system and contract labour shall be abolished.

## **The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall be Opened!**

The government shall discover, develop and encourage national talent for the enhancement of our cultural life;

All the cultural treasures of mankind shall be open to all, by free exchange of books, ideas and contact with other lands;

The aim of education shall be to teach the youth to love their people and their culture, to honour human brotherhood, liberty and peace;

Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children; Higher education and technical training shall be opened to all by means of state allowances and scholarships awarded on the basis of merit;

Adult illiteracy shall be ended by a mass state education plan;

Teachers shall have all the rights of other citizens;

The colour bar in cultural life, in sport and in education shall be abolished.

## **There Shall be Houses, Security and Comfort!**

All people shall have the right to live where they choose, be decently housed, and to bring up their families in comfort and security;

Unused housing space to be made available to the people;

Rent and prices shall be lowered, food plentiful and no-one shall go hungry;

A preventive health scheme shall be run by the state;

Free medical care and hospitalisation shall be provided for all, with special care for mothers and young children;

Slums shall be demolished, and new suburbs built where all have transport, roads, lighting, playing fields, creches and social centres;

The aged, the orphans, the disabled and the sick shall be cared for by the state;

Rest, leisure and recreation shall be the right of all:

Fenced locations and ghettos shall be abolished, and laws which break up families shall be repealed.

## **There Shall be Peace and Friendship!**

South Africa shall be a fully independent state which respects the rights and sovereignty of all nations;

South Africa shall strive to maintain world peace and the settlement of all international disputes by negotiation - not war;

Peace and friendship amongst all our people shall be secured by upholding the equal rights, opportunities and status of all;

The people of the protectorates Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland shall be free to decide for themselves their own future;

The right of all peoples of Africa to independence and self-government shall be recognised, and shall be the basis of close co-operation.

Let all people who love their people and their country now say, as we say here:

**THESE FREEDOMS WE WILL FIGHT FOR, SIDE BY SIDE, THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES,  
UNTIL WE HAVE WON OUR LIBERTY**

---

**Course: National Democratic Revolution**

**12061, Call to the Congress of the People, Freedom Charter, 1955**

2572 words